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Walnut

An Essay
on
Mania A Potu

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By

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of
N. Carolina
1825

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An inquiry into the various derangements of health which the use of Spirituous potations either predisposes to or calls into action, tho' perhaps a subject of as much interest, as could, at present, engage the attention of either the Moralist or Physician, is yet too extensive even were I possessed of the necessary facts to prosecute the subject, to be comprehended within the limits to which I must necessarily confine myself in this essay.

I shall therefore, merely attempt in this place to give some account of one of the many consequences, to which the intemperate use of this most pleasant to many, yet noxious drink, has subjected its victims. The disease to which I allude, Mania a Potu vel Temulentia, is one for the most part peculiar to habitual drunkards. For the better comprehension of its nature, it might appear useful to notice the successive phenomena presented during & after a fit of intoxication – but, perhaps, it will be sufficient for my purpose, since they are unhappily the objects of almost daily observation, to state, that the stage of excitement, characterized by an increase of all the volun= =tary & moving powers of the system, flushed face, extreme volubility, often excessive irascibility, augmented action of

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the heart & arteries, heat of surface &c, in short of all the functions of the body & mind, is at length, followed by a state of collapse, mental alienation, loss of voluntary power, a still greater increase of determination to the head, reddened eyes, swollen & suffused face, pouting lips, heavy respiration, disturbed sleep during which very apt to grind their teeth & mutter indistinct sounds, irregular twitchings of the fingers — After lying in this state a greater or less time they at length awake, tho. quite unrefreshed, it is now they begin to complain, very commonly of headache, vertigo, throbing of the carotids, confusion of mind, weight at stomach, distressing nausea to which retching & vomiting soon succeed, great thirst, occasionally slight fever, an almost insupportable sense of langour, prostration of strength, irregularity of temperature, excessive irritability of the stomach & whole system, nervous tremours, &c To relieve which the unhappy creature again has recourse to his bottle, repeating as he with unsteady hand seizes on to his fated potion, the cant proverb of every drunkard "a hair of the dog is good for the bite", by this perhaps he feels

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refreshed and happy would it be for many could they resist the temptation which this renovation but increases to touch again, too often however is the same scene acted over & over again.

At length these repeated indulgences impair the health more seriously. when ever he omits his usual stimulus, which now appears almost necessary to his existence, his debility is so great, that he soon recurs to it again with the vain hope of supporting his strength, his digestive apparatus which at first was only temporarily deranged becomes now much impaired, appetite irregular at one time voracious at another squeamish. his bowels for the most part constipated, tongue more or less foul, some febrile movement, pulse full but seldom very tense, universal tremours, occasionally convulsions &c – his memory & other mental faculties impaired and more permanently affected by intoxication.

At length either from his stomach refusing to retain its usual quantity or from some other cause, he suddenly lessens or in toto abstains from drink It is now that the disease in question makes its appearance

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The symptoms of which I shall now proceed to enumerate, they are commonly so peculiar & well marked as not often to be mistaken for any other case by one who has observed the disease.

I have already stated that this affection is mainly confined to habitual drunkards usually it occurs on the subsidence of the excitement consequent to a debauch of unusual duration, tho' in one instance, which I witnessed in the country, it seemed to be as it were a mere continuation of the ~~intellectual~~ intoxicated confusion of intoxication.

The disease generally commences with a sense of chillness, langour, loathing of food, headache, vertigo, short interrupted slumbers, bloated and suffused face, injected eyes, countenance commonly expressive of great fear & anxiety or wild & staring, tho' sometimes fixed & sullen. oppression at the stomach, nausea & vomiting the latter however seldom observed after the case is completely formed, tongue for the most part foul, generally covered with a whitish fur and clammy, at other times more heavily loaded & dry or of

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[illegible] generally [illegible] which [illegible] [illegible] which will [illegible] [illegible] humming [illegible] [illegible] - the [illegible] [illegible] imperceptible. [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] sleeplessness, general irritability, universal tremors particularly in the hands &c, which is so marked as to have conferred on the disease the title of Delirium Tremens. Often there is a perversion of the vision as various objects floating before the eyes, appearing inverted or double &c.

The mind is variously affected, for the patient is with the fearful apprehensions of some attempt to injure him, or what is very common, that the walls of the house are tumbling in and with uplifted hands [illegible] the patient screams for help or attempts to prevent it by supporting them himself [illegible] [illegible] by his friends [illegible] for the purpose of

[illegible]

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[illegible] usually [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] of these [illegible], the danger is more imminent. Violent [illegible] symptoms, very rapid & feeble pulse, extreme coldness of surface, permanent dilatation of the pupils [illegible] are the [illegible] of a speedy dissolution. [illegible] appears to be [illegible] muscular [illegible] a total inability to sleep [illegible] being [illegible] an alarming degree of exhaustion, is to place the patient beyond the resources of the art. This is so much the case, that we should feel concerned for the result, however continued watchfulness [illegible] to quietude & [illegible], if symptoms of sudden exhaustion should accompany.

The Pathology of this affection seems as yet but imperfectly understood, nor have I any very satisfactory hypothesis to submit. I shall therefore be brief on that head. [illegible] we consider the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] cases [illegible] for time, of alcoholic [illegible] which [illegible] received into the

Stomach, we must not expect to find very serious derangement of its functions, congestion of its vessels inflammation etc. and this opinion will be supported by the symptoms of gastric distress and irritability, as well as the appearances often observed in post mortem examinations —

The liver being intimately in close sympathy with the stomach, could scarcely escape participation in its injury, and accordingly we find it more or less deranged in its structure, size etc and its bile secretion either such as we see in cholera, large quantities of bile are in some cases to be met with in commencement of the attack

There would seem to be a remarkable susceptibility in the liver to be affected by the too free use of spirituous liquors, as perhaps a fact is more frequently resented to the observation of the practitioner of medicine. What influence it can have in producing or protracting this complaint or what kind of connexion exist between

in [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to appreciate
intermitting [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] most [illegible]
[illegible] circumstances, disease of this organ.

That the [illegible] of the brain, would be in a diseased condition in this affection is what we should naturally be led to expect from the [illegible] situation of the cause as well as that some of the symptoms are strongly indicative of the fact, as the injected eyes, sense of weight, headache, coma &c. and in most cases it would seem to be more particularly affected with that congestion, which the debilitated state of the heart functions and relaxed condition of the skin with enfeebled action of its vessels must induce in the internal viscera. That this congestion often does result in inflammation is certain as well from the severity of the symptoms above related, as the observations made in post mortem examination and when present or suspected, should not be overlooked in the plan of treatment. It is, however,

to be observed that in some cases, the brain has presented a perfectly natural appearance, perhaps from the vessels in the act of death, emptying themselves of their contents, since this has been observed to occur in parts evidently inflamed. [illegible]

[illegible] The [illegible] which post mortem examinations have [illegible] to throw on the pathology of the subject is but [illegible] the changes [illegible] revealed [illegible]

Besides those already [illegible] we have [illegible] in the [illegible] inflammation of its [illegible] the mucous coat of the stomach [illegible] thickened [illegible] and all the structural derangements to which the [illegible] is subject. In others again not a trace of morbid lesion is to be discovered — so [illegible] satisfactory have been the investigations that [illegible]

[illegible] The object of the present [illegible] is to ascertain what morbid lesions

[illegible] the case [illegible] as a result of an increase in the [illegible] of their mode of living and that [illegible] would be [illegible] in [illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] of the belief in this case [illegible] the [illegible] of [illegible] disease from the [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] strength [illegible] most of them are [illegible] capable [illegible] it would seem [illegible] probable that it results from some [illegible] [illegible] of the nervous system, and [illegible] of an [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] as well as the place of [illegible] [illegible] has been considered most generally susceptible, is the [illegible] of nervous irritation which are to be [illegible] in every case and we know that [illegible] irritation alone when confined even to a small part of the extremities is capable of inducing a total exhaustion as may continue [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] from the mutual [illegible] of various cerebral [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] I consider the disease as owing to [illegible] the intestinal mucous membrane congested and that in a constitution so much

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impaired as to be unable to react or produce regular & equable excitement that the functions of the stomach liver skin, in a word, of all the secreting organs, are impaired or suspended, whether as a cause or concomitant, will be of little moment in the treatment, since their restoration is equally essential to the re-establishment of health and that these, together with excessive nervous irritation constitute the leading peculiarities of this disease. —

From the obscurity which seems still to hang over the pathology of this disease the treatment appears not to be so strictly deducible from principles as we might desire. From what has been said however, the dictates indication in the curative endeavours would appear to be the following; to remove the nervous irritation, and induce sleep; to restore the functions of the alimentary canal skin &c: to receive irregular determinations and secure the establishment of an uniform excitement.

Many of the unfortunate objects of disease seem labouring under

This [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] discussed.

The [illegible] comfort [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] persons in such a filthy condition after [illegible] [illegible] session into the [illegible] is [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] requires the [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] change of apparel — [illegible] is not the only advantage derived from this cleansing process. a disposition to sleep is occasionally induced [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

The [illegible] of cold aspersion has been highly recommended by good authority when the cases proper for its employment are judiciously selected — I have seldom seen its application myself, but should suppose it might be very advantageously employed in the early stage of the disease to allay the excessive irritability — [illegible] excitement under which they often labour. A single application [illegible] the patient was very ungovernable & irritable, allowed in 2 or 3 [illegible] with good effects, completely composing them. [illegible] should be cautious in its employment, [illegible].

then such extension of the system or debility of the constitution exists as might render the impulsive powers of the system which should, in this case, be aided by the usual remedies employed to promote reaction as stimulants internally, frictions &c. In all doubtful cases it would be the better plan to employ these ablutions, which may be impregnated with salt &c. and should be used 2 or 3 times daily. These means generally have the effect of [illegible] as well as [illegible]

It has long since been observed that drunkards do not bear any kind of extreme depletion, or sudden evacuation with the impunity of more temperate persons. Some in the treatment of the Phlegmasiæ by repeated bleed, that we should use some degree of circumspection. Their constitutions are so much enervated by their habits of excess, that they will sink under measures which might prove advantageous to others, and in the disease before us, so much is this the case,

tal general bloodletting is entirely forbid by our best practitioners, even in cases where they would suppose active local inflammation to exist and to relieve which they would prescribe, at, to the most active measures.

Others, however, recommend a cautious employment of the lancet, particularly in recent cases, and where the constitution has not been previously too much impaired by habitual intemperance.

In most cases, however, all the advantages to be obtained by such a measure will be secured and certainly with less risque to the patient by applying leeches, Blisters &c. The disease has even been said to have been brought on from the too free use of evacuations, whilst patients of such habits, are under treatment for some inflammatory affection.

The only case in which I recollect to have seen the lancet used, was that of a youth, of about 20 years of age, apparently very strong, stamina. He was then [illegible] in a [illegible] (in [illegible]) and a [illegible] in [illegible] in

[illegible] and in 36 hours he died. I will not say
of the bleeding that certainly it was of no
[illegible] time. [illegible], however,
there is an undue determination to the head,
giving rise to congestion [illegible] or inflammation,
which can for the most part be [illegible] by
the insertion of leeches, or from the [illegible] upon
being asked how his head was, complaining of
headache or sense of fullness, weight [illegible] —

The application of cups or leeches to the head
should never be omitted, and should they fail
to give relief, a blister to the back of the neck
will be an invaluable service. I have uni-
formly seen the headache [illegible] immediately
relieved by these means, & the same measure will
be preferred should be resorted to for the relief
of any other serious local inflammation —
Stimulating applications to the extremities will
also be found extremely useful in relieving the head.

[illegible] the [illegible] patients
labouring under these affections have induced
me to [illegible] the [illegible] figures of
[illegible] will be found not only [illegible] but

indispensable in most cases, to allow a portion of the blood in some other stomach. It has been justly observed that it is to the chal drinam food is to be avoided, or can it be entirely abstained from without the danger of fatal exhaustion resulting, and its use is commonly observed to be attended with the advantage of lessening the tremors of the hands &c and diminishing the general irritability. — But a [illegible] method for this purpose is [illegible] [illegible] It will [illegible] be found more [illegible] to agree with the patient than any other drink and from its [illegible] properties [illegible] more particularly indicated. [illegible] it is to be had, or from other causes it cannot be [illegible] [illegible] time [illegible] [illegible] substitute, then however, [illegible] [illegible] there will be the [illegible] for the [illegible] as I should [illegible] observe not [illegible]. In some few cases however [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] I have seen the [illegible] of the stomach so [illegible] as to give rise to a slight degree of febrile excitement. The [illegible]

of something, such articles will only add to the unhappiness of the patient & of course, should be discontinued. It will sometimes seem a mystery to most to the use of some simple infusion, or rather a mere solution of salts, together with the regular application of exercise.

I have observed above, that the functions of the stomach are almost universal, more or less deranged and in perhaps one half of the cases the bowels will be found in a constipated state which could well have existed, in many of them from childhood. It is, therefore, in almost the majority of instances, that a mild aperient should, in most cases, be early directed to this subject, and its removal immediately effected. For this purpose, perhaps, answers better than the Senna tea or doses of a wine glass full of castor oil, a pill, sufficient to fulfill the effect of its evacuation is given. A combination of rhubarb & calomel is also a very good remedy for this purpose. To these or any other mild laxative, which shall be selected for the use,

[illegible]

same time by its combination with calomel, a moderate action of the bowels is maintained. Should they fail to recover, on sustaining the regular motions of the bowels, the administration of some mild aperient salt seems to be well worthy of consideration. As excessive purgation particularly when the case has subsisted for some time would be apt to induce serious prostration, we should avoid using strong cathartics and in some cases the use of injections might be advantageously resorted to as a substitute.

The administration of the calomel should not be too long continued as it is not desirable to induce the salivation so commonly in the case of children or females. If the gums show more marking of calomel, the salivation becomes more violent, and the signs of improvement in the secretory functions exist, it is better to discontinue the medicine, but should the gums at this time or even sooner from this we should immediately resort to the use of the tartar emetic as a substitute is highly recommended and we also strongly advise the point

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] not followed by [illegible] speedy, a [illegible]
substance will be found in camphor. Indeed
it was seen in all cases to be [illegible] inferior to
opium and a combination of them has received
the sanction of the highest authority, and the
[illegible] of the most [illegible] of camphor
[illegible] in the most [illegible] manner
and it is indeed not easy to [illegible]
more [illegible] in reducing [illegible] the
[illegible] of [illegible] those medicines [illegible]
so [illegible] to ensure their [illegible].

With the same view I [illegible] the Association
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not according to [illegible], prescribed [illegible]
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one [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] such as
either originally, or after [illegible] treatment for
some days, have [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] that the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
than anything else [illegible] being nearly
[illegible] not only [illegible] [illegible] of their
[illegible] [illegible] also a release from those [illegible]
[illegible], by which [illegible] themselves

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[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

nausea, and purging as there are no means with which I am acquainted, [illegible] available in any one of them. I do not think it necessary to point out such distinction with any minuteness.

In connexion with the present subject, [illegible] [illegible] be observed, that in the last or [illegible] stage in which emetics are most particularly valuable — they tend to rouse the stomach from its insensibilities and also relieve the liver of large quantities of viscid or [illegible] vitiated bile, very commonly discharged. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] resorted to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] has not [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] was originally, at their [illegible] [illegible] portion [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] remaining.

Their employment will generally be [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible] and an [illegible] indication [illegible] with the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] by [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the susceptibility of the stomach to the action of these remedies. Their exhibition would be equally [illegible] [illegible] the reverse of this circumstances [illegible], where the attacks are [illegible] by habitual intoxication.

are in a state of constriction, and gradually so the symptoms of inflammation of the stomach are present as tenderness in the epigastrium, a tongue [illegible] or foul by issues. In the [illegible] case, this would be as fatal as in the last stages of typhus fever and in the latter as miserable as in Typhus. Phecanuanha is the article which is to be depended on in these cases its action being the most [illegible] & [illegible] which [illegible] physician knows in [illegible] of the stomach [illegible] extreme sensitiveness [illegible] from the nature of the medicine and shows the inutility of opium, subverting at once the remedial [illegible].

Neither the [illegible] of the distinguished Physician [illegible] in the [illegible] opinion, but the real result, see Medical Recorder vol. 3 p. [illegible] number 17) is to be an total rejection of Emetics. It is almost total recession of all the [illegible], can be afforded of. It seems to me thought it sufficient to state that

the stomach was ascertained, to consider this more bold than safe practice. Indeed experience the best director the most surely [illegible] guide, has lately shown the [illegible] of such management. Several cases having occurred in which the most fatal consequences could unequivocally be ascribed to this cause. It has been [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] a fatal exhaustion [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] than the [illegible] of an [illegible] medicine. [illegible] the [illegible] of the [illegible] a [illegible] administer the [illegible] already [illegible] more particularly [illegible] the [illegible] full [illegible] [illegible] generally be found to [illegible] [illegible] that [illegible] and [illegible] which [illegible] [illegible] usually [illegible].

With respect to diet I shall merely observe that from the [illegible] of the digestive apparatus, small quantities [illegible]

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will be required, and that generally should be of light & nutricious qualities as Beef Tea, soups &c, all of which should be highly seasoned. —

As it is an object of primary importance, to induce sleep, if possible, of course all unnecessary noise, light &c, should be carefully silenced, and excluded. In one or two cases, however, where apprehension seemed increased by darkness & solitude, I have known the patients more composed, when a moderate light was admitted, and when kindly nursed & attended to. — It is a circumstance not a little singular in the history of this affection, which, I believe, was first noticed by one of the Senior Students of the Almshouse Infirmary, that of the several hundred cases, that have been introduced into the establishment during the period of his stay (several years), at least 9/10 were in the months of May, June, July & August. —

Whether this be owing to the greater prevalence of dissipating habits; or to the influence of season, I confess I am unable to say, perhaps both may have their effects. At least it has been commonly observed, that we are more susceptible at this time and more subject to be debilitated by any cause.

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In conclusion I may observe, that in our conduct towards our patients, and in our directions for their management, we should be mild & feeling and inculcate as a rule, the most gentle & unrestrained treatment consistent with their situation. This in the opinion of the best practitioners, is that most likely to benefit the patient, and surely it should be no less our pride, than our duty to exercise our benevolence & compassion towards such unfortunate, afflicted, & bereft creatures; bereft of that, which, though ever so feeble, is yet to them, what the pale & glimmering light of the almost exhausted lamp, is to the adventurous subterranean explorer - It is his all - extinguish that, & he is lost indeed. It is, however, needless to say more in this place, with the reflecting & feeling part of our profession, such sentiments are familiar and can never fail to have their influence.

Willis M. Lea
Leasburg, N. Carolina
1825

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